THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) At the behest of State Government of Jammu and Kashmir, Airports Aurhority of India (AAI) has developed a new civil airport at Kargil to enable air-connectivity to this region and boost tourism. Regular use of the airport is yet to commence.

(b) Indian Airlines is presently, operating regular services to Leh, the nearest airport to Kargil, from Delhi, Jammu, Srinagar and Chandigarh. Airlines plan their operations on the basis of their judgement on commercial and operational viability. At present, Airlines have no plan to introduce air services to Kargil.

(c) Since this airport has not been commissioned for operations so far, no Airports Aurhority of India (AAI's) staff is posted there, at present. How/ever, the employees of the Border Roads organisation and J & K State PWD, who were assigned the works of development of this airport, are still positioned at this airport, and no complaint regarding non-availability of consumer goods to them has been received by AAI so far.

Purchase of long range aircrafts by lA

621. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Airlines has decided to purchase 17 long range aircrafts;

(b) If so, the routes on which the same are proposed to be introduced as replacement or fresh induction; and

(c) the estimated cost of the aircraft and the steps taken for procurementthereof, indicating the supply proposals under consideration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) to (c) Indian Airlines has submitted a project report proposing acquisition of 43 aircraft at a net projected cost of Rs. 10,089 crores. The new aircraft are envisaged to replace the existing fleet of A-300 nd B-737-200 in a phased manner.